

Documents on Diplomacy: The Source

The Consul at Canton

John Jay to Samuel Shaw, New York, January 30, 1786

Sir,
I have the Honour of transmitting to you herewith enclosed a Commission constituting you Consul of the United States at Canton in China. You have my best wishes that you may derive advantages from this office equal to the Honour and Propriety with which I am persuaded it will be exercised. Although neither Salary nor Perquisites are annexed to it, yet so distinguished a mark of the Confidence and Esteem of the United States will naturally give you a Degree of weight and Respectability, which the highest personal merit cannot very soon obtain for a Stranger in a foreign Country.

It will not be necessary for me to dwell on the advantages your Country may derive from the Information you may acquire. Permit me however to request the Favour of your Correspondence, and that you will transmit to me by proper Conveyances whatever Intelligence and observations you may think conducive to the public good. The mercantile and other Regulations at Canton respecting Foreigners, the Number and size of foreign Vessels and of what Nations which annually enter there their Cargoes and what articles of Merchandise answer best, are matters which merit attention. It might also be useful to know whether Foreigners do or can carry

on a circuitous Trade in that part of the World, either on their own account or by being Carriers for others whether Asiatic or European. Accurate Information on all these points will probably require Time to collect and as accurate Information only can be useful, I cannot flatter myself with receiving ample Details from you very soon after your Arrival, unless on such of these Subjects as may not require much Time to investigate.

I shall not omit writing to you by every opportunity, and will do myself the Pleasure of sending you such Information respecting our Country as though perhaps not very essential to you either as a Consul or a Merchant, cannot fail of being interesting to an American Citizen early and strongly attached to his Country.

With sincere Esteem and the best Wishes for your Health and Prosperity I am &^{ca}

JOHN JAY

Source

The Emerging Nation: A Documentary History of the Foreign Relations of the United States under the Articles of Confederation, 1780-1789, Mary A. Giunta, Editor-in-Chief, Volume III. Washington, DC : Government Printing Office, 1996.

NA: PCC, item 120, v. 1, pp. 74-75 (LBHc); M40, reel 2